

*Re Weaver
and Fosdick as he
comes on*

*Statement of
R.F. internally
situation, Weaver
etc*

January 28, 1936

Dear Doctor Edsall:

The task of preparing three large items for the Spring meetings obliterates the likelihood of my getting South. Consequently I shall write you instead of enjoying the preferable exchange of ideas in conversation. Please forgive the length of this letter: it is perhaps selfish of me to take the opportunity to put down some reflections at the expense of your time.

You ask about the opinions of the other officers here. It is hard to tell: the past is the past and the future uncertain, and there has been no interchange of opinion that I know of. Any move to discuss matters would risk having, in Fosdick's absence and at present, an unhappy flavor though perhaps I am wrong in thinking so. With the exception of Day I don't know whether any of the others would care to talk, and Fosdick I judge knows Day's views more freshly and vividly than I. We haven't had a kind of leadership which has emphasized the exchange of opinion, the suspended judgments, and the reflections of the officers - at least so far as I know - and most of the others don't go in for that sort of thing anyway.

So what follows is my own view - and there are several subjects in addition to those I'll mention, but they are subordinate in importance as it seems to me.

1. The pressure at Williamsburg in the direction of fewer and more intensified fields of activity has occurred, together with the question of Rockefeller Family pressure (q.v. under #8) the most attention. It seems to me a somewhat paradoxical situation. The reorganization of 1929 substantially broadened the Foundation's field of activity. Compare as major classes of expenditure:

1925	1935
Administration	Administration
I.H.B.	I.H.D.
D.M.E.	M.S.
Division of Studies	Humanities
C.M.B.	C.M.B.
	S.S.
	N.S.
	Hunn's China Program

The income has dropped to about the 1925 level, but we now have in addition to our then activities, the Social Sciences, the Natural

the Humanities, and Gunn's program in China as major avenues of study and disbursement. In the face of such an extensive range the Trustees want some handles, guiding lines and general programs and some limits. JDR iii told Appleget his principal concern in reading docket was to watch to see if an item was really within program. I wonder whether the Trustees weren't unwittingly the first offenders in the point of spread and aren't urging upon the officers the same arguments for narrowing divisional interests in order to be effective which would have been applicable at the time of the reorganization.

I am sure that program making and enforced adherence thereto puts the Trustees as a body into the same position as a nervous system minus its afferent impulses, i. e. the officers don't act enough as channels to convey changes in the feel of things but only as effectors of mandatory decisions. This is administrative tabes. It contrasts unfavorably with Buttrick's view that it was "the program of the G.E.B. to have no program but to feel its way and 'cleave fast unto that which is good'." I am coming to see that the real loss of strict programming is that it masks the defects of an officer's judgment, abilities and usefulness, as well as lessening his sense of freedom and interest. It doesn't emphasize inquisitiveness, alertness, or commonsense, nor does it put high quality of men and projects as of first importance but rather the Board's program. In the medical and biological sciences our explanations of our programs make US scientists restive (H.A. Spoehr reports) and the English sarcastic or disappointed where they are not bewildered (A.V. Hill, Dakin, and O'Brien report.) I am also inclined to think that emphasis on program limitation is just the kind of policy I should expect when the Trustees don't feel that they understand the projects submitted nor entirely trust the results of Trustee-Officer collaboration. On the other hand a clear-cut program is easily grasped and definite for the Trustees, it is an effort historically identifiable and referable to the RF and with the present large number of small and temporary grants, an economy of effort on the part of the officers.

Now if a divisional officer knows his fields and has real qualifications for his job he will give a recognizable emphasis to certain fields and balance this emphasis with commonsense and some curiosity about what is happening to Science independently of Rockefeller Foundation deliberations. I suspect that the Trustees' principal duty is to find officers to whom they will feel comfort in entrusting a considerable measure of freedom.

It seems to me that a bewildering variety of programs was the inevitable result of the reorganization - bewildering to the Trustees. Whether the officers were accused of frittering or spreading things too wide and too thin you will know, but certainly there was a pressure of narrowing the program, and an enforced trimming went on in which Day became embittered, Weaver had mathematics and the physical sciences taken away from the NS, most of the medical sciences were urged out of the NS, and Mason felt more and more acutely that the Trustees didn't understand

the program. As a matter of fact what the Trustees didn't understand was the full effect of a decision to extend the program, plus a diminishing income with which to do it, plus a loss of real trust in some of the officers.

2. There is, however, a form of concentration that has been to a large degree lacking in these last five years. During this time we have given a very large number of small and short term grants. They take a lot of time, they breed by their example innumerable interviews and correspondence from everywhere, they soon come up for renewal, extension or at least evaluation. It isn't our role to be the largest and most varied distributors of chickenfeed in the world. If the Trustees would steadily press for a balance between a few large scale and some small scale operations and focus attention on the validity and excellence of the projects presented and not their classification I believe the sensations of being too widely spread would cease, and for the simple reason that the divisional funds are rather sharply limited. The duration of aid should correspond to the evidence of probable value and the nature of the work to be done. Small projects should be used to explore promising opportunities that might deserve larger sums. It is a truism to state but almost a novelty to apply the belief that officers should have more time out of the office. If we regarded it as our job to work up one or two projects good enough to be long or large much time would be saved and we should get out of "the thick of thin things."

3. The question of R. family pressure has been answered in large measure though I'd not be surprised at recurrences. Fosdick will be able to discuss matters favored by the Rs at a much earlier stage than did Mason and so avoid tension as between the family and the president but I am not sure that he will be able to prevent a steady pressure from asserting itself in the form of requests which will seem foreign to the views of individual officers. It seems likely that officers will be in a somewhat exposed position visavis the Family. My main concern in this sector concerns the capacities of JDR iii and what he will mean when his father dies or retires. He is a young man of considerable tenacity once his mind is made up and rather inclined to waste time on detail.

4. The relations of NS and MS are not easy for me to discuss, for the obvious reason that the possible solutions are either clearly advantageous or clearly disadvantageous to my own status and preferences. I speak of the NS in terms merely of its present orientation so nearly exclusively in the biological sciences. It seems to me that either the NS and MS should be fused or that the line between them should be on the basis of the recipient institution being a medical school, hospital, or medical institute, or other than that, the NS taking all others than the medical schools, etc.

Weaver was taken to direct activities for which as a mathematician he was in part at least directly qualified. Precisely these activities have been taken away from him, and there remain six or eight fields in which he and his colleague, Tisdale in Paris, are quite simply not at home. As an old friend of Mason he has had a handicap and an advantage. I was outweighed

again and again by the combination and saw that it was quite useless to state my convictions more than two or three times. But I will tell you confidentially my opinion that the Foundation's handling of the biological sciences could be put in hands far more competent internally and far more acceptable externally than is the case at present. You can consult Whipple, S. Flexner, Weed, Dakin, A. V. Hill, or H. H. Dale and get comments which have come to me and which I have not known how to handle. And despite this I like Weaver personally and only regret that the Foundation chooses to oblige a mathematician to run its widely varied program in the biological and medical sciences. Though pretty naive in dealing with people, he is sincere, conscientious and hard working. But in so far as he is inadequately oriented in the field he will be without any more protection in the future than the rest of us have had, and I doubt if he realizes what that means. You can discount all this if you choose, for it is quite clear to me that I have been hurt and angered at times by the NS taking NS undertakings as their own without any clear criterion of which was to be which. And if you discount my feelings and opinion I shall quite understand since I've been hard at work for the past year in the same direction and would have resigned if I hadn't had some success at distrusting the effects of my feeling on my judgment.

5. In the point of staff my principal concern is that Fosdick shall be gentle, steady and human in the handling of personnel and with them get into the pleasant relations of which he is capable. I hope he can learn to be less overcrowded and hurried, and to be tangible and solid as a person to have understandings with. There is much to be done with the morale in the office but even more with the outside.

6. If we consider the matrix in which the Foundation works - our world and our times, there are one or two more points to be mentioned.

The divisional officers aren't traveling enough. We have all been in Europe in the past three years: but only one of us speaks French, German or Italian. In the Far East only one of the five divisional officers has been in the past five years, in Russia only one of the five ever, in South America only two ever. By what assumption that isn't childish can we be content with such a basis for ignorance? If it may be accepted as logical that one who has travelled and learned to speak foreign languages may have some knowledge of what such experience offers then I would venture to say that proportionate to their opportunities and responsibilities there is much that is being lost in my being the only officer at home in three languages and able to negotiate in three more, the only one except Sawyer to have lived as much as a year outside the US, and with Sawyer the only one ever in the other America and the only officer to have visited either China or Russia - two areas of immense importance in our world of today. I'm in a 4-1 minority when it comes to questions that involve the world and in view of that I've learned that is just a stupid and ludicrous indictment of the RF in the light of its charter and the direct knowledge we should and could have. You will remember "the welfare of mankind throughout the world." I'm about ready to add to that motto "without visiting it."

As to our times - it seems to me that no activities of the Foundation are so likely to survive political and economic changes as those activities which are necessary for the upbuilding of the disorder that attends political and economic revolution, not activities to stave off change. If we make ourselves experts in experience and reflection upon experience the Foundation will be let alone and tolerated. But I see no point in archaeology to the tune of \$6,000,000 (more than this has been spent on Breasted) nor any relief contributions to the poor of New York (who consume \$8,000,000 a month through the Emergency Relief Bureau alone) nor a good many other studies of what isn't going to be of any value in stopping change. The studies of Chaucer get funds: the study of the history of radio awaits attention.

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Well I'm far from writ out but I will stop writing as I hope before you've stopped reading.

Yours sincerely,

ALAN GREGG

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